

# UAV SUPPORT

83rd Communications Squadron

one-of-a-kind mission  
one-of-a-kind team

By Maj. Chris Miller

83rd Communications Squadron

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. — Unmanned Aerial Vehicles have changed the landscape of modern warfare forever with their ability to provide real-time video that enables more accurate attacks and intelligence.

Working to make sure UAV video gets to the right places are the Airmen of the 83rd Communications Squadron's Force Level Tech Control Facility. The FL-TCF here is the only facility in DoD that disseminates these video products.

Staff Sgt. Nathan Barber said, "The biggest advancement in this war is intelligence, and we play a key role in disseminating that information."

For instance, video from the Predator Operations Center at Nellis AFB, Nev., where Predator UAVs are flown is transmitted to the FL-TCF. Here the Airmen decode the video and then send it out to all their customers.

But Predators aren't the only UAVs being supported. The unit also supports Army Hunter and I-GNAT UAVs and they are postured to support the Marine Scan Eagle in the near future. And while the Air Force mans the facility, the mission is joint in every regard as they support the Army, Navy, Marines and other DoD agencies.

One challenge the 83rd CS faces is there's no place to send Airmen for training since there's no other facility of its kind. Their equipment is one-of-a-kind as well. By its nature, the job is very technical requiring months of additional training to produce a fully qualified Airman.

Instead of seeing this as a negative, the Airmen see it as an opportunity.

"UAV support is a new spin on comm," said Airman 1st Class Gabriel Jones. "It's great to see how comm equipment can be used in ways most technical controllers never dreamed of."

During the next two years, the number of UAV orbits is projected to increase more than 200 percent and that's only within the Air Force.

"When you see a UAV flying or see the video on your computer or up on the data wall, don't forget the dedicated personnel behind the scenes who make this possible and the vital role they play in the War on Terror," said Master Sgt. John Wagner, NCO in charge of the facility. "When you can actually see live operations happening in Iraq or Afghanistan, it's good to know our video dissemination has a crucial role in accomplishing the mission and saving lives."